

ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE

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The Graduate School

Morehead State University

April 19, 2018

VISUAL LITERACY IN CENTRAL APPALACHIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
CLASSROOMS: A GUIDE TO IMAGE FIRST LEARNING FOR  
INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING AND IMPROVED OUTCOMES

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Abstract of Capstone

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the  
College of Education  
At Morehead State University

By

Natasha B. Watts

Blackey, Kentucky

Committee Chair: Dr. Jeannie Justice, Assistant Professor

Morehead, Kentucky

April 19, 2018

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VISUAL LITERACY IN CENTRAL APPALACHIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
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INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING AND IMPROVED OUTCOMES

The Visual Literacy Playbook is a project meant to help educators introduce classroom activities promoting identity, visual awareness, and build a sense of community. This book is tailored to meet the needs and the student population of classrooms in Central Appalachia, particularly, Eastern Kentucky. Providing activities, rubrics, and guidelines, the book demonstrates how to build ownership into the classroom to promote successful outcomes. Many pedagogies and theories suggest that students in areas like Central Appalachia and Eastern Kentucky learn differently than their counterparts (Freire, 2000). Addressing ownership is one way to help students achieve more successful outcomes (Hendrickson, 2012).

KEYWORDS: (Central Appalachia, Visual Literacy, Community College, Online Learning, Images First Learning)

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Candidate Signature

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Date

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## DEDICATION

How could I ever say thank you enough? How do I define what it feels like to have someone on your side after a lifetime of loneliness? There are no words in our language to thank you for your support, my love. But, here we are, here I am thanking you for your support. I love you Sassafras.

To my precious babies, Finnegan and Vivi, I love you so. I hope one day you rule the world, or the forest, or the rivers. Always be happy. Always feel the sunshine. You will always be my greatest work and my proudest accomplishment.

To the many women in my life: my mother, my grandmother and my mother-in-law who no matter how much life knocked you down you got back up and you kept going. Thank you. I write this because you never stopped trying, and you never stopped getting back up. My life is possible because you worked, and you dreamed. My daughter's life will be even more possible because of the strong women who went before her. May you know that your hours of hard work have paid off. We are rising, we are dreaming, and we are changing the world we know.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you, Dr. Jeannie Justice. Dr. Daryl Privott and Dr. John Curry. It has been a tremendous experience and blessing to be part of the program. Dr. J. Justice, Dr. Privott, and Dr. Slone-thank you for playing a vital part in my ability to complete this work. Your role has been so beneficial to my ability and my capstone, growing me not only as a student but as a practitioner. To my co-worker and friend, Wendy Davidson, soon to be Dr. Wendy Davidson. You're one of the best, and I can't thank you enough for the encouragement.

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## **Executive Summary**

### **What is the core of the capstone?**

We all learn differently, just like personalities' learning is unique to each person, and we should approach learning in an individualized manner. Growing up in a place rooted in a way of life that exists only within that community changes your personality, thus changing the way you approach learning. The foundation of my theorization is rooted in an ideology that living in a culturally rich area, like Eastern Kentucky, makes you assess content and learning differently than counterparts living in a more mainstream suburban area. Learning is never stagnated, and it cannot always be applied in a board spectrum. The age of the Internet and the growth of individualized learning has proven that we have not met all the challenges in understanding how others learn.

Learning differently does not mean you cannot learn. Instead, it could mean you follow a path that is not outlined by those who went before you; you must make a new path. Creating that path and forging ahead despite of the challenges always poses difficulty. Having grown up in Central Appalachia, my world and the world of others like me, tends to be driven by a three-dimensional model built on images. This model is one that we are born into, that is molded in us by our landscape, our loud cultural differences, and socioeconomic barriers. These differences have governed how we learn, how we assess content, and how we measure our worth. The differences that make up our communities are also differences, opinions, and life experiences we carry into the classroom.

Appalachia is a special place to many and solving any of the deeply rooted issues of this geographic location also means understanding the history and contextualizing that for the future. The community members need education; education that works for them. This challenge means thinking outside of the box and reshaping how we deliver content.

Central Appalachia is comprised of many riches which come in many forms. Being brought up in a landscape of parallel beauty and an economy of unmatched poorness changes your vision. A culture that is rooted in poverty creates a multidimensional vision for many of its young people; both literally and figuratively. Students and those who apply to learning tend to learn differently because of their location, and the socioeconomic factors that play a part in their lives.

Visual literacy offers a potential path to change and develop students' abilities, and it is a way to redesign content in a cost-saving and efficient manner. I theorize that visual literacy will prove valuable to classrooms in Central Appalachian, and it will serve students who need individual attention in how they learn and process course content.

Technology has become a way to reshape the classroom (Greenhow et al., 2009), it offers a means to an even playing ground for classrooms in rural, urban, rich or poor areas (Herold, 2015). Giving students ownership in the classroom provides them with a familiarity with the material, creating a learning value system for those students and establishing a lifelong learner (Fletcher, 2008). Technology is a fluid, interchangeable word and a term that can be interchangeable in just about every

subject. Tools are something many of us envision as a way to fix things or a way to reinvent something. Tech tools are just that for the classroom, they are add-ons, they are a means of invention for the classroom, and at the base, all things are relatable in technology. For instance, Twitter and the Telegraph both work in character systems, and both function to get short messages to other people, but Twitter and the Telegraph look vastly different. However, learning one of those tools is the foundation for learning another, but we must first take those steps to learn the functionality of the tool.

We need to look more at visual literacy in comparison to socioeconomic class. Little research has focused on students' class and literacy style, and it is imperative in the age of individualized learning that we understand those needs, and how to design course content to meet them. We need to reenvision how we think about learning, from the individual student and not the content as a whole. Learning is no longer a brick and mortar store, it is a virtual space that we cannot touch, and space that is owned not by the educator but by the students.

### **Who is the capstone meant to impact?**

As we understand that being "Appalachian" also means being different, we should understand that when you grow in a place that is seen as different, you tend to see the world differently. Being different is a wonderful delight in a world saturated with likenesses. However, educating others on those differences is an imperative method to creating diversity in communities, especially classroom communities. Students who live in rural areas like Central Appalachia must find a sense of place to

make sense of their location. Rural students must have discourse with others inside, and outside of their area to have a rounded understanding of who they are (Edmondson, 2003).

When systemic poverty is present educational value is often very low for community members (Hendrickson, 2012). With job opportunities decreasing in Appalachia, a high number of working adults are employed in low paying jobs with little opportunity for advancement and those who pursue higher education often educate themselves out of a job (Hendrickson, 2012). The inequality that joblessness and half-a-century of poverty creates builds a culture of resistance and students who are resistant have a likelihood of being less successful as contributors to society (Hendrickson, 2012). Resistance is often referred to as willful not-learning, noncompliance, attitude, defiance, and disengagement (Hendrickson, 2012). In 1964 author Margaret Anderson wrote *“Education in Appalachia: Past Failures and Future Prospects”* (Anderson, 1964). The article outlined the outmigration of young people, due to the lack of opportunity, expressing that national standards and factory systems never quite took hold in the mountains. The author also noted that in 1964, some forms of Elizabethan speech could still be found with words like “heerd” for “heard” (Anderson, 1964). Between a culture of poverty, a lack of work, and deep culture of dialect and so much more that can exist in Central Appalachia, students in the region are facing things that no one else in the country experience and geographical isolation has furthered a divide (Rice, 1996).

Eastern Kentucky has come a long way, but progress is still needed. During a 2016 radio production by National Public Radio's Education Team (nprED) listeners learned that students in Wolfe County, Kentucky were using social studies textbooks that were more than 12-years old. Just the idea that students are using books more than a decade old makes a bold statement about the lack of opportunity and the room for growth.

Between dialects, storytelling, and a way of life that seems outdated to many, growing up in Appalachia makes you different than those who may grow up in a more suburban setting (Anderson, 1964). Having the ability to attend class close to home offers comfort for students born into the rich culture of Appalachia. Having your coursework taught by someone who lives in the same community as you can often be a more comfortable notion for students who wish to attend college. Hazard Community and Technical College was established to fill a need in the southeastern coalfields of Kentucky. Serving a seven-county region the college offers a comprehensive learning environment and seeks to reshape how the region is educated ("About Us: History of Hazard Community and Technical College," 2016).

Technology has created an opportunity to even the playing field for many rural and poor schools, and the students who make up those schools and communities. The ability to access what once seemed off-limits has started a slow change in students of Central Appalachia. These students come from a background of storytellers, and a multi-dimensional landscape that is always present. This changes how those students contextualize classroom content. Preparing teachers for students



who see the content first, allows educators to address Appalachian diversity in the classroom opening learning opportunities for those cultural-visual-learners.

As the traditional classroom dissipates, online learning grows. Nearly 30% of all college students take an online course (Friedman & Friedman, 2013). Technology has created a learning environment that gives students in rural places and working students a chance to take classes anytime, from any geographic location. Information technology can be a cheap and accessible way to grow the economy when policy and infrastructure exist and support it (Oden & Strover, 2002). While Appalachia has struggled in so many ways, technology offers a new light and potential for new problem-solving mechanisms in the region.

The current state of higher education is filled with students known as digital natives, or students born after 1980, and anyone born before 1980 are known as digital immigrants (Robinson & Ritzko, 2009). Understanding that most classrooms are filled with students who always had access to Internet puts into perspective how important it is to have information available to access almost instantly (Pascoe, 2012).

Because digital natives have existed in an era of instant information new learning methods, have emerged. These students have shorter attention spans, and their communication strategies are much more complex with the majority of exchanges happening online (Pascoe, 2012). Students today want instant and tailored information that can be accessed and shared immediately (Pascoe, 2012).

Education brings progress, that is deeply woven into successful outcomes of a community (Anderson, 1964). For Central Appalachia to change what has been, and

what currently still exists, change in education must occur. Understanding that change and how to create change is perhaps the most complicated task. However, education and the people of the region are the strongest proponents to making true progress (Semuels, 2015).

### **How was the capstone project implemented?**

The project was implemented using iBooks. The iBooks platform is user-friendly for creators and consumers. It is widely utilized technology that many educators have access to. The interactive components will help expand the plays that are written and help instructors develop more prolific use of the concepts within the playbook.

### **Why were this capstone and related strategies selected?**

#### **Appalachia**

What does it mean to grow up in a place that for more than fifty years has been one of the poorest in a nation that boasts its richness? This stereotype, this idea, is forever implanted in community members who call southeast Kentucky home. What makes east Kentucky so different and what makes them poor? All of those idealisms could be argued, could be cited, but the core stands; something is different about this land and its people.

Now, more than fifty years after the War on Poverty, Central Appalachia has changed, and yet, much remains the same. Starting in 1964 and lasting nearly a decade, the War on Poverty dumped millions of dollars into the region (Glen, 1995). With efforts to improve almost every major facet of the economy, the War on Poverty

sought to make those identified as poor by the government equal to their counterparts outside of the region. In a 2014 news article published by the New York Times, six of the hardest places to live in the United States were located in southeastern Kentucky. Breathitt, Clay, Jackson, Lee, Magoffin and Leslie counties, were all classified as “hard places to live,” due to the systemic poverty and lack of opportunity (Flippen, 2014, p. 2). This mindset has been in abundance since President Lyndon B. Johnson, and his administration began the War on Poverty in 1964 (Matthews, 2014).

The War on Poverty did several things for the communities that lived along the Appalachian Mountain chain, but fifty-three years later the region is still struggling. The coal industry is almost gone, job opportunities are low, and educational needs continue to rise. In the words of President Ronald Regan, “We fought a war against poverty, and poverty won,” (Harrison, 1999, p. 22). For poverty to end, we must look at culture, values, and attitudes. Once we address those hard, yet necessary topics, we must understand that the process for true change will be slow and tedious (Harrison, 1999).

I grew up in the region, I have dedicated my life to changing the way others perceive the area and to helping students reach their full potential to see new possibilities. This work is a reflection of my style of learning, a style that for a long time I never understood, and nearly every educator I encountered did not either. When I was able to use a visual way to learn during a summer video program. I began connecting the dots and saw the correlations, between my ability to use visual elements in a learning environment. I want this work to help those students who learn

differently, and to guide educators that want to see the full potential of all students. This book exists for those who want to see beyond teaching an alphabetical, and numerical way to learn, and exist so those students who see an image first will have the ability to learn their way.

### **Technology**

Students spend more time on smartphones, the Internet, and televisions than they do in the classroom (Avgerinou, 2009) and classrooms all across the United States have felt a push to grow their learning spaces using technology. Visual literacy is not a new idea; for centuries we have conveyed messages through imagery, but only in the last 20-years have we began to introduce it into the classroom (Felten, 2008). With the access to new technology, our reach has become larger, and our ability to use visual tools is more accessible.

Understanding what technology is, and how best to use it, often becomes more of a burden than success for classrooms. Taking time to learn tools can be timely but understanding the functionality of tools is vital to the knowledge transfer from one tool to another. A pressure-sensitive digital drawing tablet that allows for a more tactile connection to digitally creating images, no matter what model, will function in a similar vein, just as any smartphone on the market will have many of the same features. Taking the initial step to learn one product will ultimately move you to the next product when the market changes. The teacher must understand that using tools is pertinent to building lesson plans when preparing for class.

## **Media Literacy**

In a given day we are exposed to thousands of images, how we see and interpret those images changes, and reshape what, and how we think. Images are everywhere and can be accessed by nearly anyone who has an Internet connection. Current generations have endless amounts of information at their fingertips. With the new age of computers, social media, and eLearning on the rise, technology will continue to outpace research changing the social norms as it goes (Pascoe, 2012).

Media literacy and media education in the classroom can be a strong tool for change (RobbGrieco, 2014), and Appalachia needs change. Using images as a means to lead the classroom, can address learning needs and give a new perspective to those students. Change must come from those who have stock in the communities; this is the driving force to creating a population of well-educated stakeholders.

Media literacy is vital to the current classrooms, understanding it can be very difficult (RobbGrieco, 2014). In education, media literacy is a critical component for student's success. An educator's ability to apply tech tools to instruction can deepen the learning experience. Media literacy is usually a means of reform and changes the classroom in a way that reshapes all aspects, including the social norms of a classroom community (RobbGrieco, 2014). Creating media gives power and ownership to its creator, understanding the power of media in the classroom is a critical component to moving a classroom forward (RobbGrieco, 2014).

**Education in Appalachia**

Allowing students to tell their own stories in their way is very similar to allowing those same students to help shape their communities in the way they see it (Greiner, 2010). Authors should not assume the identities of the people who live in Central Appalachia and educators should not assume they have the ownership of course material; students should drive the course material and instructional content (Greiner, 2010). When students are given a chance to take ownership of their learning, they became more self-motivated and empowered (Slocum, 2014). Having control of your environment is not something the people of Appalachian are used to, for nearly one-hundred years, coal companies or government entities have controlled much of the region. Changing ownership to the people has become a main staple to changing the landscape of poverty that exists starting within the classroom (Estep, 2011).

It is easy to infer that teaching others how to use their innate visual sense can also help them define who they are in a larger community, helping them see beyond what surrounds them. Students who grow up in a place separated from the rest of the world will see it differently. These students have always lived differently. What they see on television, is not what is reflected in their lives.

Community Colleges were founded to help prepare students for job training and transfer (Rahman & Monahan, 2014), and these institutions help improve the present and future workforce of the communities they serve. Community colleges

play a vital role in the educational system of an area and are the center of many rural towns, especially in areas of Central Appalachia.

In Appalachia, education is a constant theme that surrounds how change can be possible. Many local newspapers and authors had lived in the region long before the rest of the world noticed the state of affairs that exist in Central Appalachia (NeCamp, 2011). Those living in the region understand what change is needed, they have documented, lived, and seen how the communities could change, being heard by those who can help change it is the last step to envision a new region. Educating others on the importance of education is a vital step toward systemic change.

### **Playbook**

#### **Image as a Creator vs. Consumer Images**

When you point a camera to record video or still images, you are selecting what that camera sees, and you are making an editorial decision about what your audience will see. Video does not necessarily equal truth; it is an abbreviated representation of time and space. In a sense, you are creating your version of a story, of an object, and of a place. Those images, chosen by the content creator, transmit a message that was previously only visible in the mind of the person who captured that material.

When a person consumes an image, they have no understanding of its origin or how it was conceptualized. Image consumers seek out their interests, they look and decide to connect or move on. Creating an image ties you to that image; you establish

a relationship and connection with it. Consuming an image is more of quick appeal; you have no true relationship with it.

Visual literacy in the classroom allows the educator and the student to be both consumers and the creators. Having students create coursework using visual literacy components allows them ownership and builds a relationship to coursework. Using visual literacy in the classroom as an educator allows you to be the creator and the student to be the consumer, allowing both the educator and the student to share dual roles, creating equilibrium in the classroom.

### **Composition: The layout**

When we wake-up in the morning, we dress ourselves, we set the tone for how others will see us and establish an image of ourselves for the rest of that day. We choose our composition every day. Understanding how to help others choose composition for coursework can help them define how a student sees course material. Images can be used in nearly every course. Take math for instance; any use of charts, graphs, or objects to identify units of measurements is considered visual literacy. When I was in second grade, I had a terrible time adding and subtracting; looking at flat numbers my brain was unable to compute them. My teacher at the time pulled me aside and gave me blocks, showed me how to add, subtract, and do multiplication with these blocks. I could visualize the numbers in front of me with these blocks in hand, they no longer seemed flat, and suddenly my visual literate brain was able to recognize the mathematical relationships. That day I went from failing grades on



every math exam to passing. I speak a visual language, and I must be able to interpret nearly every subject through that language, as do many students.

### **Speaking with Pictures: Telling a Story**

Allowing students to tell their own stories, in their way, is very similar to allowing those same students to help shape their communities in the way they see it (Greiner, 2010). Authors should not assume the identities of the people who live in Central Appalachia and educators should not assume they have sole ownership of course material; students should drive the course material and instructional content (Greiner, 2010). Students need to express their ideas; this gives them ownership of the course content and builds rapport in the classroom.

### **When was the capstone implemented?**

The original catalyst for the book was a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, although the grant did not happen. However, research and discussion provided during that time warranted a great need for such an item.

The capstone project was implemented with faculty at Hazard Community and Technical College to help improve course retention rates and ownership in the classroom. The final version of the playbook is available digitally for use to educators and instructors at Hazard Community and Technical College, and local educators in the community.

### **Impact of the capstone**

Many ideas, efforts, projects, and organizations have been set in place to address the needs of Appalachia. Those efforts have changed many aspects of what

we all know about the region; however, the long-term environment will not change until those who have stake or ownership in their communities are given a chance to learn in personalized ways, on their terms. Education that addresses cultural needs of the learners will change the environment and climate of Eastern Kentucky.

Teaching rural students to tell their own stories in their way is successful in teaching them how to contextualize their communities. This contextualization allows them to re-envision who they are and where they live. Using media literacy through a rural framework allows students to be both individuals and part of a larger community. These practices help them make the connection and begin to find their place in a larger context (Pyles, 2016).

### **Limitations of the study**

The work is not a study but a project; the playbook helps guide instructors to use visual literacy in the classroom. The project was designed and installed at Hazard Community and Technical College (HCTC). While HCTC is in the heart of Central Appalachia, it is not necessarily reflective of all of Appalachia or Central Appalachia. The initial creation limited the audience of the work since the book will primarily be used at Hazard Community and Technical College. This creates population validity within the project. The population validity is limited to those in Eastern Kentucky, and only to Hazard Community and Technical College.

The project may cause a Rosenthal Effect. I will help classrooms use the book at the request of the instructor. I will be in the room while the class is in the process and as a result I could effect how the students engage with the book, how the

instructor teaches and how students react to the material. I will unintentionally change the normal state of that room. Interaction of setting and treatment will also occur, as I am choosing the where, who, and how the playbook is built. What works at HCTC, may not work at another college in the region. The book once completed will have the ability to travel throughout the region; this book is intended to help those living within the Central Appalachian region, and other culturally rich areas.

### **Reflections**

The project began to help English faculty use visual elements in their classrooms. However, it quickly grew into a product that could be utilized by any educator. The Playbook is intended to help educators have a fruitful conversation about how to help students be successful in the classroom. The book should help expand the ability of educators to connect students to courses content, building a framework for success.

After spending hours planning and building the work, I quickly realized that educators are in great need of support, not directions. I hope this book is supportive, helping teachers to build a sustainable classroom.

### **Capstone Project**

The playbook is designed to help educators expand ownership in the classrooms, allowing students to build rapport, and self-identify more strongly with the concepts, increasing their ability to complete the class successfully.

Visual literacy does not mean a person who lives in an image-rich world will naturally be able to articulate understanding images complexly, just as someone who

has an iPod cannot critically analyze or create that same music they hear (Felten, 2008). Visual literacy is the ability of an individual to understand, create, and apply culturally significant images into action (Felten, 2008). As the pace of images grows in our lives so will the need to be visually literate. Preparing students for the visual language both in the classroom and outside the classroom will be a vital part of creating a successful graduate.

In its current state, the classrooms at Hazard Community and Technical College serve a high volume of students who have low attainment rates in almost all subjects. To grow the success rates for those students, visual literacy components are being built into courses to expand how the subjects have traditionally been taught. When students are given a chance to become stakeholders in the classroom, they became self-motivated and empowered (Slocum, 2014). Being creative in the classroom is a simple way to allow students ownership of course content that is individualized and tailored to their learning styles.

In an attempt to promote ownership, increase attainment, and deepen learning outcomes, visual literacy can be added into the curriculum when applicable. *The Visual Literacy Playbook* is a field guide for educators who want to add the components into their courses. Playbooks have become a popular way to use new strategies to win the game of teaching course content successfully. The Playbook can help guide educators through the process of implementing visual literacy components into a broad spectrum of course subjects. The book defines images, composition, visual literacy tools in the classroom, and how to speak with images in mind.

Each chapter of the book provides a narrative, and a description with examples, and exercise to help educators become more fluid in the process of implementing visual literacy into course content. The text can help expand what educators understand about visual literacy. The Playbook provides a toolkit and a foundation for those understanding this strategy.

### **The Project-Visual Literacy Playbook**

#### **The Road Less Traveled**

Too often we find ourselves sitting in a room full of students who are depending on our knowledge to grow, move forward in their lives, and become more prolific members of their communities. As educators, we have studied our chosen content, developed expertise around a particular subject, and students filter to our classrooms to gather that knowledge. Students are the most important reason educators show up, day-in, and day-out. Transferring our knowledge to them is vital and at the center of who we are as educators. Some classroom leaders, we are always searching for ways to be more innovative. Often students bring a variety of barriers to the classroom, thinking about how we can remove those barriers is at the heart of many educational challenges.

Course content may not always be malleable, but our design of course content should always be flexible. As an educator you are a content expert; sometimes getting that knowledge into the curriculum can be difficult. When planning instruction in the classroom educators must think about the steps, the phases, and the end game for any given learning outcome. Being creative in the instructional design process can be a

great way to help build successful classes. The way educators explain course material, pass knowledge and show students how passionate they are can be critical for the exchange of growth and the expansion of our communities.

Many educators have been here; thirty students show up, we have our standard curriculum, and for some students, it completely fails. We see students struggle every day to learn what we had previously taught with great success. We know we need change but time is not always on the side of educators as students, reports, and the daily routine keep coming. Even though our time to edit and improve can be limited, our student population is ever changing and growing.

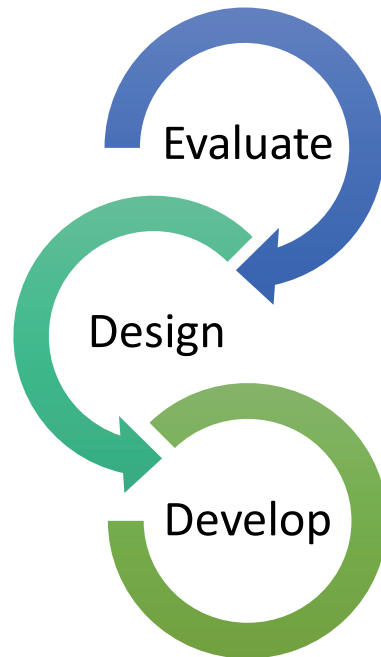
Learning environments are a shared relationship. We bring students our content expertise, and they bring open minds and the ability to absorb and sometimes challenge our knowledge. We share what we know with them, but we do not address how they will own that content. What is content ownership? Think about it; you own what you know, you own your expertise, and you have earned that knowledge through repetition or practice. Students come to our classrooms leaning on that, but when we teach, do we always make room for them to own what they learn? Are we giving them the opportunity to gain ownership of our expertise? Do we deliver content that they can understand? Do we provide content in the way we learn or the way they learn? We need to address these questions every time we step into a classroom; we need to address classroom ownership and how we approach students. We are all learners who are sharing and expanding on what we know. As educators, we should reassess each session, and we should approach each group of new students

ready to adjust our approach or expand our methodology. Students all learn differently, and teachers all teach differently, these are things that play to the advantage of the creation of creative course curriculum (Gilakjani, 2012).

Students growing up in any community are exposed to the norms of that group. They are exposed to an auditory and visual narrative that the geographical and social landscape of that place may present. This experience shapes students; they are formed in how students approach the world, how they see other social norms, how they talk and especially how they learn. Educators should filter students through a community lens that provides students with various ways to learn and gather the knowledge of that classroom leader (Slocum, 2014).

This playbook introduces one way to expand content for students who grew up in rural, culturally rich communities in a region that has faced socioeconomic adversity. It also introduces lessons, offers discussion items and helps educators navigate the use of visual elements in the classroom. Some theories suggest that allowing students to create in the classroom can build student ownership in the classroom, diversifying the instructional methods (Fletcher, 2008).

As educators we are engineers of the classroom, designing how content is built and delivered to students. Instructional design models are a way to help keep our methods consistent and fluid. The Successive Appropriation Model (SAM) is a simple but effective way to structure your course content. In SAM (see *Figure 1*) you have an evaluate, design and develop phase. Each phase offers a way to deliver one concept, allowing you to break down how you deliver an idea (Allen & Sites, 2012).

*Figure 1. SAM*

- Evaluate: What are the goals and objectives?
- Design: Using a new method, design a lesson to meet your goals and objectives.
- Develop: Deploy the lesson, evaluate its success and redesign its components as needed, reevaluate your goals accordingly.

Going forward in this playbook, thinking about your community, classroom, and student body, use the SAM method. Start incorporating images and content ownership as the first part of your lessons, allowing students to be an active part of the design.



### Connection

This playbook is meant to help all students and educators, but it is specially tailored to meet the needs of those living in the Eastern Kentucky (*see Glossary of Terms*) communities of Central Appalachia (*see Figure 2*). Central Appalachia has long been studied for its landscape, economy, and socioeconomic issues that have haunted the region for more than sixty years (Ziliak, 2007). Many theories and pedagogies have proposed that students in culturally rich, economically hard-hit communities, like Central Appalachia, see the world differently (Anderson, 1964). Students in these communities learn in a more dimensional (*see Glossary of Terms*) way than their counterparts (Freire, 2000). We need to teach in a way that allows those visual identities to rise, contextualizing our learning content (Hendrickson, 2012).

Figure 2. Introduction to the Visual Literacy Playbook



<https://youtu.be/lai9I6n8h7Q>

**Image: Creator vs. Consumer**

“I made this: that means something”. When a student creates content for learning, they gain ownership and attachment to that content (Slocum, 2014). We cannot expect students to engage with our curriculum without cultivating a space where they can identify and access their thoughts and experiences into the materials. When we create work, we own that work and the experience of making it happen. When we design our own learning experience, we build pathways to the more in-depth understanding of a subject (Chester, Buntine, Hammond, & Atkinson, 2011). Students must be consumers and creators (*see Glossary of Terms*), teachers must be consumers and creators, not sharing both allows for an uneven balance in the

classroom environment. Learning is a shared space, not an autocracy, and students must have the ability to access learning in personalized ways to become empowered.

### **Applying It in The Classroom**

Many community college students come into the system with little to no ability to read or write (Bork, Mason, Perin, Peverly, & Vaselewski, 2011). So, what do you do when a student has a 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade ability to read, and 2<sup>nd</sup>-grade ability to write? Start with images and allow students to choose how they tell you a story. Allow them to teach you how they process information. Images (*see Glossary of Terms*) are a universal language, allowing students to develop a pathway to writing more prolifically while developing a structure to build their skills in a purposeful way (Boss, 2008). Too often we complicate the simplest things for our students, our minds are not their minds, and our methods should not alter the way we deliver content. As educators, our experience with students molds us and shapes us. Our students are vastly different with each class. With each cohort, the new personalities and identities shape how we approach the classroom and re-contextualize the learning experience. Each student makes us impartial in some way. I have never met someone who loves the classroom that did not get attached to a student, or the personalities and life they brought into that space. This care and devotion we have when we meet those students always alters our stance in the classroom. As educators we take the time to understand that context in which our classrooms exist, to better serve all the students. What do the communities we teach in feel and look like, and who are the students, what are the obstacles they face, what are the goals they have? Even when our

message is the same, we can change how we deliver it to make it our own and to individualize it for the students. This expands our love for the classroom, our devotion to those students, adding value to the learning experience for all involved. Educators can be a vital part of the community; I think this is something we must not forget.

### **Action**

Gather a series of 10 images (see *Figure 4*) allow students to organize these images and verbally tell you a story with the images. There is no right or wrong answer here, but this assignment will help define learners in your classroom and allow them to grow an attachment to the process (see *Figure 3*).

### **The Break**

Did students give you a full story (see *Figure 5*)? Was it different than if you had them write it? How many students did well telling you the story with images but not writing?

### **Follow It**

Now have students write the story they told you with the images, allow them to use one image to lead each paragraph. The image comes first for many students, so let them have the images and begin writing.

Allowing students to create course material early is the first step in gaining ownership of how they gather the skills necessary to improve learning (Slocum, 2014). As educators, we must understand that students do not have to learn in the way we learn, or the way we teach. However, students must leave our classrooms

having grown their abilities to understand the subject. It is not how well we teach but how well we build the highway to our enterprise. We engineer the learning space; students must understand how to build the interior.

**Test**

During the first class consider spending time having students do a storyboard assignment. For years the television and movie industry has used this method to pitch ideas to audiences. This method is still the way others understand the vision of the creators. It has been widely successful in getting large groups to invest in a movie or television series (Pallant & Price, 2015). Why? Because most people do better when they have more than one method of developing or engaging with material. Allow students to build an attachment to the material and your course; this ownership will help foster a rapport and build a relationship with the class.

**Replay**

Allowing students, the ability to create in the classroom can give them a sense of ownership and provide positive reinforcement. This type of support can help students remain in the course, increasing their chances of completing it successfully.

**Assignment Materials**

*Figure 3. 10 Images Explained*



<https://youtu.be/2cExjNMB2mg>

Figure 4. 10-Images

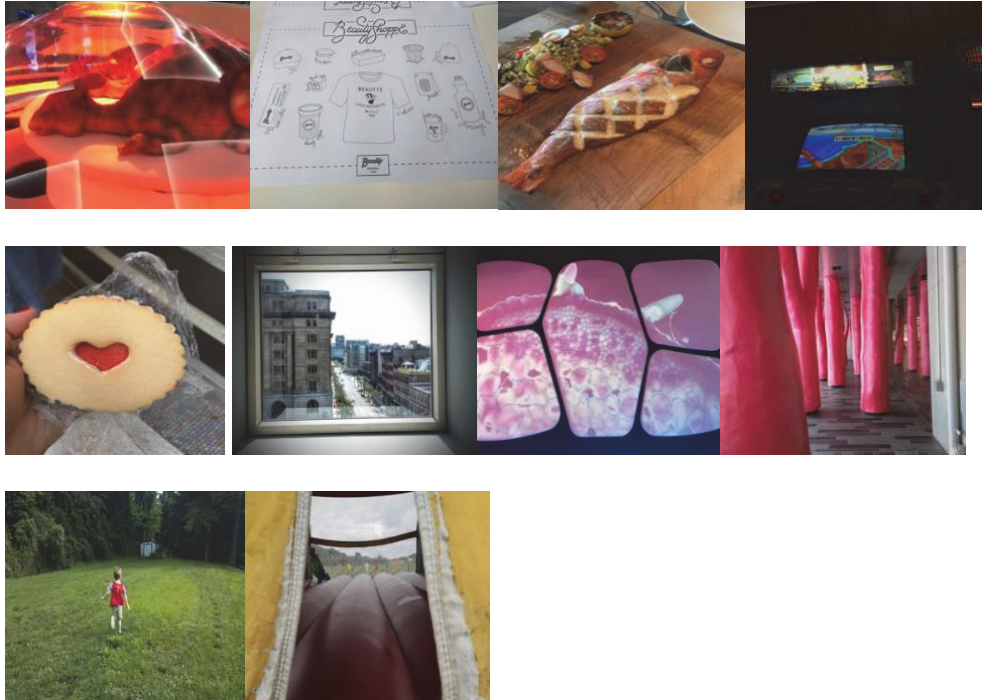


Figure 5. Rubric-Image as a Creator vs. Image as a Consumer

Category	Crushing It!	Awesome	Almost	Needs Work	Total Points Possible
Storytelling	Student provided a well thought out story, had a beginning, middle, and end, each one building on the next. The student placed a lot of effort into the details. (25 pts.)	The concepts seem well thought out, could be a little more detailed, but student gave it a "B" effort. Student could offer more details and little more	The student developed a timeline and gave a presentation. The story needs some work, not a lot of effort was given to the work. (15 pts.)	Gave a very short story, only spoke a few lines, very careless on the details, did almost no work. The student showed no effort. (10 pts)	25

<b>Effort</b>	The student worked hard to think through all the pieces. They went out of their comfort zone and surprised the class and instructor with their presentation. <b>(50 pts.)</b>	story development. <b>(20 pts.)</b> The student went out of their comfort zone, student gave a full presentation and had some original thought, applied themselves. <b>(40 pts.)</b>	The student presented work showed up and gave it a shot. They could have worked harder, but they tried. <b>(30 pts.)</b>	The student did not present any work, or the student presented very little work. Student completed work last minute, and the work seemed rushed. <b>(20 pts.)</b>	<b>50</b>
	<b>Technique</b>	Students understood the assignment they provided a clear presentation; they provided clear thoughts. The student showed the ability to present a great visual story, and they gave it a unique voice. <b>(25 pts.)</b>	The student thought about the images. Student clearly did some work, gave it a "B" effort to think outside of the box and get out of their comfort zone. <b>(20 pts.)</b>	Student presented an effort; they showed some thought was placed on how to present the images. The student gave an adequate overview of the images and story. A student could put more thought and detail into the work. <b>(15 pts.)</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Total Points</b>					<b>100</b>



### **Image as a Consumer**

As educators, we must have a good understanding of our personal learning style. How we gather our knowledge is vital to clearing the way for our own inability to see, hear, and process how others learn.

When students grow up in rural or urban areas that have faced economic hardship through multiple generations those students are often not the creators of their fate. These students have become accustomed to obstacles, hurdles, and the constant feeling that they are less than average. This creates a void in students dismantling their confidence and their ownership (Ziliak, 2007). When you are in a classroom you are the consumer of the course, and when you are an educator you are the creator of the content; you disseminate your ideas and your knowledge onto students. This creates an uneven balance in the classroom, you are the leader, you are an authority, and you hold power in that place (Gardner, 2013). It is even more of a tightrope when you work in communities that have never owned their economy, their jobs, or their futures. The choice to help redefine how communities learn and how students perceive the educational environment is vital to creating a new community and redefining what it means to live in a poor place (Rausch, 2010). Adding images and allowing students to create their content is just one small step in the direction of allowing them to own space and their outcomes.

When educators write a lesson plan or create an outline for their classrooms, they look at what outcomes they want, matching the materials of the course to competencies and goals. As educators, we hope students walk out of our space having

expanded what they know. When we create content, we own it. How do students feel when they never own their learning, and they never own the content? How would you feel if you just kept consuming the lessons of others never creating your own? Having students create materials in the classroom is important to creating an attachment to what they learn, and how they learn. Most content has space for students to create. When we use images, we reimage how they see things in a very literal way.

While in grade school teachers use images, objects, and other means to teach students math. When students arrive in the college classroom, we neglect to give students options for processing math content. Why? By this age, we all think that those students who learned best with circles, squares, and blocks would have grown out of that. However, most have not, most students possess a specific style of learning. We seek to continue teaching via a blanket methodology. Some students need the content mixed up; students need to find a way to process materials and self-identify (Fletcher, 2008).

### **Applying It in The Classroom**

I use an exercise I call *earth, wind, fire, and water* (see *Figure 6*) when I teach introductory video courses. I have students go out and shoot a short piece that must abstractly show all of those things. For instance, fire cannot be shown directly; however, students can express it visually with a fire hydrant. This allows them to begin processing outcomes differently. Just because I want to describe fire does not mean my mind has to see literally to know that it is fire. Many students do not learn in a literal way, or the traditional way, especially students who have grown up in a

landscape that is anything but the norm (Slocum, 2014). Imagine if you grew up in place that has been listed as one of the poorest places in America your entire life? How would you see the world? How would you see yourself, in the context of a large community? Students in Appalachia need to be given a chance to learn differently so the framework for how they understand their outcomes can be seen more abstractly.

**Action**

Give an assignment that forces students to create their outcomes. For this exercise, my methods “*earth, wind, fire, and water*” (see *Figure 6*) are provided. Have students use images, or video to describe these things indirectly. The video or images must tell a story about each and cannot be the literal interpretation of the words (see *Figure 7*).

**The Break**

How did students bring you their work? Did anyone capture the same idea? Who did better on this? The top-performing students or the lower performing students? These activities should allow you to understand how your students perform when given some creative space.

**Follow It**

Have students assess your work on this same topic, prepare a clip of some abstract images that are meant to describe one word. Make sure to mix-it-up with each group of new students. Changing the materials up will allow the students a broader sense of the work. It will also help you build a deeper pool of course materials to design course content around.

**Test**

Now give students an assignment. Make sure you only give the bare minimum of directions. Did they do better than previous classes after working on an abstract project (see *Figure 8*)?

**Replay**

Encourage students to think independently and challenge you as an educator. Yes, have them challenge you. Why? When students question anything, they are thinking about it, and thinking is progress, especially in a landscape like Eastern Kentucky, where the stereotype already seems to be written and photographed for students before they even begin defining who they are (Slocum, 2014).

**Assignment Materials**

*Figure 6. Earth, Wind and Fire Explained*



<https://youtu.be/1d2SydoisOE>

*Figure 7. Images from Earth, Eind and Fire.*

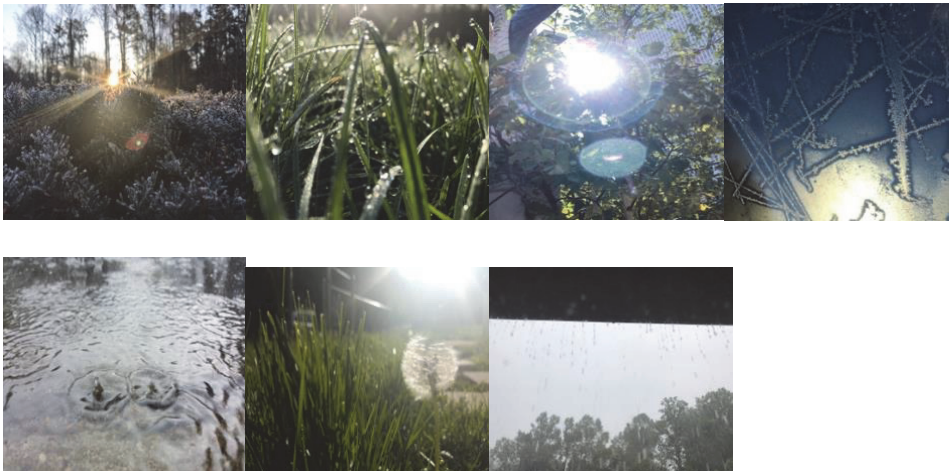


Figure 8. Rubric-Image as a Consumer

Category	Crushing It!	Awesome	Almost	Needs Work	Total Points Possible
<b>Images</b>	The images are great, clear to view, well framed and the concept is something you did not imagine or think about. As an educator, you feel surprised. <b>(25 pts.)</b>	Student captured pleasing aesthetical images; they did a good job of getting the work done. <b>(20 pts.)</b>	Student presented images, but very little original thought was placed on what they captured. <b>(15 pts.)</b>	The student did not complete or fulfill the assignment. The student placed almost no effort into the work. <b>(10 pts.)</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Effort</b>	The student went outside their comfort zone, they placed effort into the work, and they really tried hard to fulfill the assignment, going beyond what was expected. <b>(50 pts.)</b>	Student completed the work as requested; they presented images that fulfilled the assignment. <b>(40 pts.)</b>	Student completed the work; they need to do a better job at placing effort into the assignment. Very little work was done. <b>(30 pts.)</b>	The student did as little as possible and just wanted to pass the assignment. They placed no effort into the work. <b>(20 pts.)</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Technique</b>	The images are shot at a unique angle, they student has used various techniques to	The student placed effort on capturing images that were pleasing to the eye and	The student did not have a lot of original thought; it seems as though they	The student did not attempt the work and showed very little interest and did not	<b>25</b>

	give you some well-rounded pictures with good overall content. (25 pts.)	completed the assignment. (20 pts.)	just shot images to get the work done. (15 pts.)	participate in completing the assignment. (10 pts.)
<b>Total Points</b>				<b>100</b>

### Composition: The layout

Every educator I know makes a plan. No matter what level, we all plan how we approach our topics and our intentions in a classroom. When we build curriculum, we design the composition of that subject. When students approach homework in the classroom, they also comprise a process to reach their intended goals. Students create a beginning, middle, and end to getting a product that they think the educator wants. Helping students strengthen their ability to process their work is essential (Kraver, 2013). As human beings, we have all been placed in a circumstance that has challenged our abilities in learning. Think about how much easier this process would be if you had a framework or a way to help you break down this text that was your own, that individualized it for you.

Many students in underserved communities are exposed to a narrative that almost seems prewritten for them; they have no attachment to the layout of their own lives (Rausch, 2010). This can create a feeling of distrust, and a detachment from most things that could alter their future, especially education.

When we look at an image, we see it as a whole first, but given time to process that image we often find a deeper meaning or even a story the image might be portraying (Boss, 2008). When students are given an assignment, their process to understanding the work and the ramifications of that work are most often filled in with a pre-written narrative. Allowing students to build a narrative for themselves is important. When students build their narrative, it can clear any pre-written narrative away.

### **Applying It in The Classroom**

Have students use a blank storyboard (see *Figure 9*) and ask them to storyboard how they did a previous assignment from any class, what was the first step? What was the second? Third step ... and so on. Give them a chance to process how they do work, do not accept blank squares, all the boxes must be filled.

### **Action**

Have each student do a second storyboard and ask them to storyboard how they get dressed. Again, all boxes must be filled in. Then have them compare the assignment's storyboard to the getting dressed storyboard (see *Figure 10*).

### **The Break**

Did any students draw? Did some students write out what they did? Did some students do almost nothing but tell an elaborate story when asked aloud? This is how you will start to distinguish the variety of learning styles students possess clearly. This simple task will make a statement about how they process and expose others to their way of processing, including you as the educator.



**Follow It**

In your next class assignment offer up more than one route to complete an assignment. Allow students to come to the materials in their way, and listen to what they say, even when it is not spoken. Giving students an outcome with various driving paths creates some ownership because they are choosing the route.

**Test**

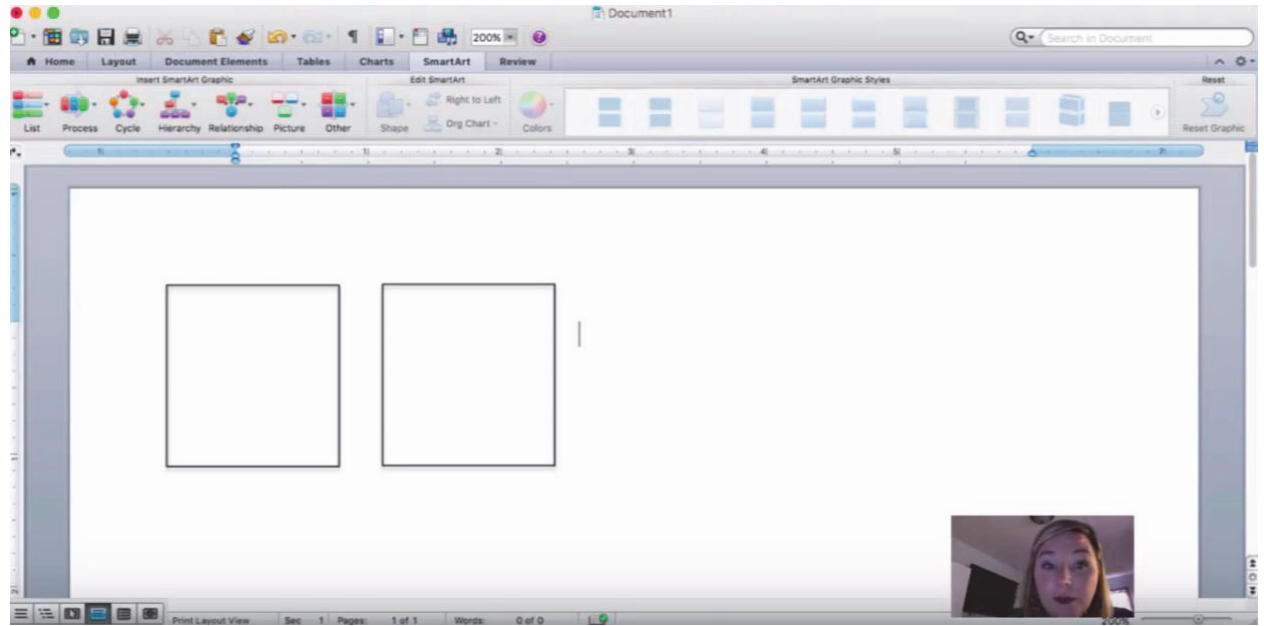
Before going into the classroom allow yourself to do the storyboarding assignment “getting dressed.” This will help you see the work from the students’ perspective. See what you do differently each time you redo it. Are you allowing the students to change your method? Are you changing your steps? As educators, we should constantly assess our approach and understanding of how we process materials in the classroom (see *Figure 11*).

**Replay**

Allowing students to participate creatively early in a class gives a chance to build ownership and rapport with the work. Giving them options to have ownership of course content can also help them grow a sense of attachment to the classroom and the learning environment.

## Assignment Materials

*Figure 9. Making a Storyboard*



<https://youtu.be/pTmdhUbXprI>

*Figure 10. Storyboard panels shown in video.*

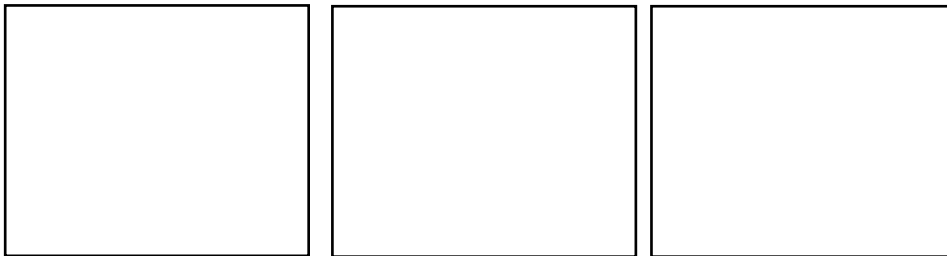


Figure 11. Rubric-Composition the Layout

Category	Crushing It!	Awesome	Almost	Needs Work	Total Points Possible
Story	The student did an amazing job. The student told a simple but complex story, the student put a lot of effort into presenting it the work. The student worked outside of themselves to perform the task. (25 pts.)	The student worked hard, did a good job at expressing their story. (20 pts.)	Student completed the work, did very little to express themselves interestingly. (15 pts.)	The student did the least amount of work possible; the student did not complete all boxes. The student put in very little effort. (10 pts.)	25
Effort	The student worked hard to fulfill the assignment, they participated to the fullest in the activity. (50 pts.)	The student thought hard about what to do, they completed the work and gave an acceptable effort. (4 pts.)	Student completed the work but did not work hard. The student did a minimal amount of work and placed very little thought into the exercise. (30 pts.)	The student did not complete the work fully; the student did almost no work. (20 pts.)	50
Technique	Student drew or used images and words in all boxes, they	The student offered up more than one way to express their	The student did not think about the exercise, they just wrote out	The student did not complete all boxes. The student did	25

	gave details and placed a lot of work into expressing their story. (25 pts.)	story. The student gave it a good effort. (20 pts.)	a process in a very short manner with little original thought. (15 pts.)	not attempt actually to do the work. They filled in less than half of the boxes. (10 pts.)
<b>Total Points</b>				<b>100</b>

### Speaking with Pictures: Telling a Story

Course materials are a precursor to something else. Course materials tell a story, a story that is an add-on to another lesson, an extension, or the start of a new story (Clarke, Flaherty, & Yankey, 2006). Educators teach things to others with the idea that they are giving them something new that will allow them growth. More than anything, educators want students to keep learning and growing (Ash & D'Auria, 2013).

Storytelling is a strong tradition in Central Appalachia. For generations, families have orally kept their family histories and the history of the region alive through this form. When I was about ten years old, a group of four children lived next to us in a very small shack. Every day, when we would go out to play, the siblings would tell of a beautiful dress their mother owned. The stories of its beauty, and how great she looked in it, grew every day until my curiosity piqued. Upon seeing the dress, I was not flattered, and I did not understand the lore around the object. However, to this day I cannot seem to shake how much they loved that dress and how elaborate the tales of this dress were. This is a common example of how folks share

information in some parts of the region. Lots of folks in the region dress up stories in detail adding life and vibrancy to common dialogue (Donlon, 2015). Eastern Kentucky has a rich and beautiful history of people describing even the simplest of things in a story form. Leveraging this history of storytelling can be an important method to understanding how to get some students within the region engaged in the course content.

As educators when we start building a course or working on our approach for the semester, we are always looking for ways to refresh our content to best serve our students. Students from orally rich cultures are prone to learning in ways that are different (Slocum, 2014). Growing up in a place that is unlike any other place in America can make you feel different. This difference can often bleed over into learning and other parts of students' daily life. Thinking about the location of our students and building in placed-based learning activities can help deepen their experience in our classroom (Goodson & Skillen, 2010).

As an educator we spend a lot of time planning curriculum and preparing for class, this is a vital part of success in the classroom. Understanding how that curriculum fits into the communities in which we teach is also an important structure to successful planning. When communities are rich in tradition, like storytelling, we can use that in our planning to help create a more successful curriculum design.

Like many other small towns and rural parts of the country, community colleges are at the center of how students learn, what students learn, and the amount of higher educational opportunities students have (Crawford & Persaud, 2013).

Community colleges are a great place to start using innovative approaches to the classroom. Community colleges often have some of the most unique student bodies of any classroom in adult learning. This diversity is a perfect setting to try new instructional design techniques and curriculum.

### **Applying It in The Classroom**

When students come to the classroom, finding out who they are is important and can be essential to building rapport in the classroom. Often times students want you to know who they are. I do not care what they say; there is nothing a student knows better than themselves. Students are most skilled and versed in their own identities, even when they struggle to express it. Having students use images as a way to describe themselves can be a valuable lesson and insight into who they are. Building an identity of images without fear of false representation is valuable to partnerships in the classroom, especially for students who have spent their lives in a culture that has been portrayed by others (Hendrickson, 2012).

### **Action**

Have students use one image to tell a story about who they are. The students will choose how they present this work to the class. I would suggest having the class match the photos to the person. This can be done in any class and is a great first and last day assignment. Using it at both the start and the end of class helps you see how they have grown in your classroom communities (see *Figure 12*).

**The Break**

How did students choose to present themselves? New photo, old photo? Was it an abstract photo or a straightforward photo? How did they present it? On their phone, or was it a print? Did they all participate? Make sure you choose at least one photo that tells a story about yourself.

**Follow It**

Have students do this at the beginning of the semester, follow-up at the end of the semester. Ask them to choose different photos, allow the class to identify whose photo goes with whom. This is a fun way to have students build their identity and gives a voice to who they are in a very simple way.

**Test**

How did students react to this? Was it positive? Was it negative? Did it build a strong class? Or did it do nothing (see *Figure 12*)? We must always ask ourselves how our curriculum improved the class and we must always note what worked well and did not work well.

**Replay**

Each body of students has a culture within their cohorts. Finding something that works for each group builds a relationship to the course and the classroom community. This relationship is vital to the growth of those students in your classroom and the success they may have while attending school.

### Assignment Materials

Figure 12. Rubric-Speaking with Pictures Telling a Story

Category	Crushing It!	Awesome	Almost	Needs Work	Total Points Possible
<b>Storytelling</b>	The student told a vibrant story with the image when asked about it. The student gave an interesting presentation, and a lot of original thought was put into the work. <b>(25 pts.)</b>	The student gave a good presentation of their image and fully participated in the exercise. <b>(20 pts.)</b>	The student did very little to describe the image and choose an image last minute. Very easy to see the student did not place a lot of work into choosing an image. <b>(15 pts.)</b>	The student didn't even attempt to prepare. The student pulled together an image at the last minute. <b>(10 pts.)</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Effort</b>	The student attempted to go outside of the box and offered an original, thoughtful photo. The student seemed to go outside of their comfort zone or gave it a full effort. <b>(50 pts.)</b>	The student did the work, and it was interesting and thoughtful. The student could have been a little more original about the process. <b>(40 pts.)</b>	The student placed little effort into choosing the image. The student just wanted to get the work done. <b>(30 pts.)</b>	The student did not prepare. Student hastily pulled an image up last minute. The student seemed not to want to participate. <b>(20 pts.)</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Technique</b>	The student chose an image that was complex and gave a	The student chose a nice image, it looks good and is clear.	The student chooses an image that is fairly	The student chooses an image last minute or not at all.	<b>25</b>



	very interesting story with few words. (25 pts.)	(20 pts.)	straightforward and expected. (15 pts.)	(10 pts.)
<b>Total Points</b>				<b>100</b>

### Outtake

This playbook is meant to provide curriculum design ideas to help enhance work for educators. Appalachia has been a place where change comes slowly; our classrooms are a great place to speed up that process, boosting our communities. The playbook provides educators and instructors with plans for success with diverse learning in the classroom. The plays should help expand on classrooms that are focusing on retention while boosting confidence in the students. Giving students educational opportunities and individualized learning activities may aid in their success within the classroom.

Never underestimate the power of how special you are as an educator, you are the anchor, the doorway, and the only opportunity many students have. All educators and educational leaders bring vital skills to a community, creating longevity in that community and helping maintain the livelihood of a place. Growth and our future rests in the rooms we teach in and the students we educate for the next generation.

## Glossary of Terms

### County Economic Status in Appalachia, FY 2018

(Effective October 1, 2017 through September 30, 2018)

The Appalachian Regional Commission uses an index-based county economic classification system to identify and monitor the economic status of Appalachian counties. See the methodology for a description of each economic level.

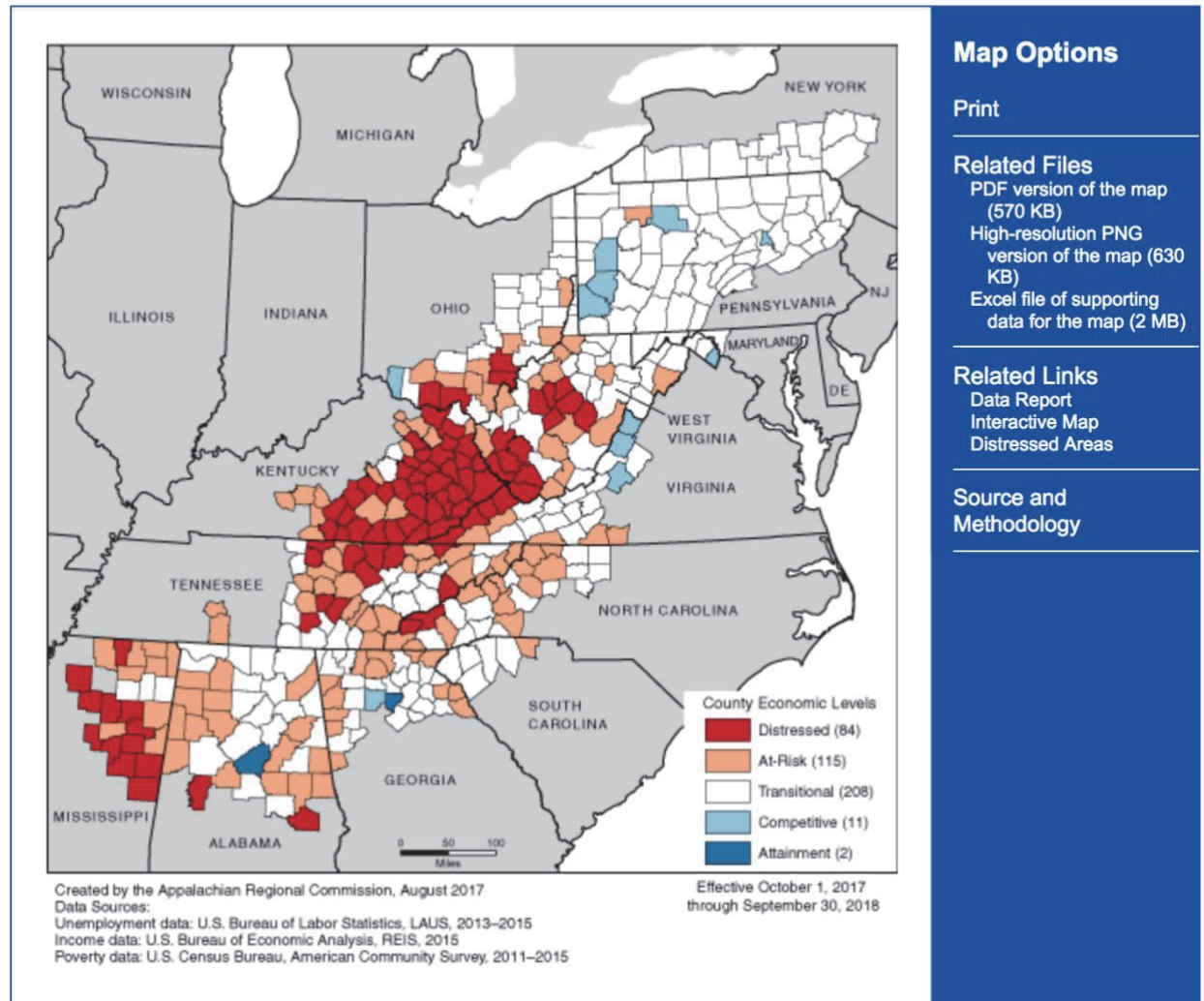


Figure 13. County Economic Status in Appalachian, FY 2018, Appalachian Regional Commission (2017).

**Central Appalachia/Eastern Kentucky**-When I think about how to define Central Appalachia and Eastern Kentucky, I look for an image to express this. Above in *Figure 13*, you will see a map provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission. In the center you will see a large section of red, this concentrated area of red is Eastern Kentucky, and Central Appalachia. While creating the playbook, I refer to many of these areas and images.

**Images**-When I write about images, I am referring to a flat still pictures that can help the reader or learner process what the author is trying to convey. If a student can see the picture first, they may be able to interpret more accurately the text that follows.

**Dimension/Dimensional**-Having depth, having more than one meaning; When I think about dimension, I think about complex things, like *Figure 13* above. We can infer many things from the colors that are provided, and the things that must be happening in these particular locations. Dimension is a way to have more meaning. Dimensional images provide depth to the reader, or viewer, allowing them to have an expanded idea of what they are to take away from the materials.

**Creator**-A creator is a person who makes something, for instance baking a cake, or taking a photo. If you take a photo, you are allowing the world to see an image you captured, one that you created. If you bake a cake, you are allowing the world to taste the way you mix ingredients. Creators have a rapport with their creation that allows them to build a relationship with it.

**Consumer-** If someone bakes a cake and you eat it, you are the consumer of their creation. If someone takes a photo and you view it, you are the consumer of that image. When we take in what others create, we are consuming their work.

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